

STUDENTS' LETTER.

SCALE HOW,
Ambleside.

DEAR EX-STUDENTS,—To continue our last letter to you we have to go back in our minds a long, long way—over summer days spent abroad, or in holiday posts—back to the time when we were looking forward with eager expectation to the visits of Dr. Helen Webb and Madame Ginever.

Dr. Helen Webb came on Friday, June 20th, and on the following Monday we had the pleasure of hearing her paper which she read at the Conference. This we enjoyed very much indeed, especially as Dr. Webb herself read it, and explained more fully different points. Then people entering the class-room on Monday afternoon, between 1.45 and 2.45, would have seen a strange sight. Dr. Webb seated at a table, surrounded by a crowd of seniors, each provided with paper and scissors, and had those people waited they would have seen those seniors, under Dr. Webb's directions, making the most delightful objects out of squares of paper—witches in wheel-barrows, Chinese junks, and frogs—most realistic creatures—and paper ladders. Monday evening we again met Dr. Webb in the Drawing Room, where Miss Cooke read an interesting paper on Milton. On Tuesday we said good-bye to our visitor.

The following Saturday, June 28th, was the day fixed for the lecture by Madame Ginever. The weather was somewhat disappointing, and perhaps accounted for the smallness of the number of our guests. Madame Ginever was splendid—she enthralled us from beginning to end—telling us, in perfect English, a most interesting account of Hungary—her country. Added to the joy of hearing, was the joy of seeing, for on the screen lovely pictures of Hungary were thrown—for those we have to thank our old friend, Dr. Hough, who again so kindly worked the lantern. After our guests had

gone we gave Madame Ginever an impromptu dancing display in the class-room, the programme included the Eight-some, the Irish Jig, and the Sword dance.

On Monday, Madame Ginever was present at classes, and in the evening, at 6 o'clock, we had a special scouting display outside St. George's. This was huge fun—we had a scouting pageant, a procession in which each couple represented a tassel—and carried a paper tassel, which was pinned on to a large badge. Then followed tests—sensory, signalling, observation, etc.—and after cheering heartily for Hungary and England we dispersed hurriedly to change for supper. Later we had a Drawing Room evening, "Thackeray." On Tuesday, Madame Ginever attended classes again, and in the evening we had general music in the Drawing Room. On Wednesday, Madame Ginever left us.

On the Thursday we held our children's party. Our little visitors arrived about 3 o'clock, and fun began at once. It was a gorgeous day, and we were out-of-doors the whole time. We had competitions, more plant-pot walking, and needle-threading—thrilling games of French and English—and all too soon it was time for departures.

The end of term was now drawing near—on the last evening, Miss Williams, in Miss Mason's absence, presented Scout tassels at a meeting of Scouts held on the Wordsworth Steps.

Then on Saturday, July 12th, in rain and mist, we left Scale How.

We left in rain and mist, we returned expecting to find it, but we found *summer* weather—bright sun, warm air, cloudless skies—and so it remained almost until November. This was most cheering—but still more so was the news that, for our special benefit, Miss Mason had invited Mr. A. Burrell to come to Ambleside to give lessons and lectures in reading.

How we enjoyed it all! We began daily with a lesson—in classes of six—then we closed morning work with a lecture, in which Mr. Burrell explained the different points in good reading, with examples. This he did in such a way that he has left us all with fervent desires to be good readers—or at least to do our best so to be. Our last memory of him was a specially delightful one—for Mr. Burrell's last visit to Scale How was on Friday, October 3rd, and *he came to tell us stories*. In the darkened Drawing Room, from 7.45 to almost 9.45, he kept us in raptures—he told stories, grave and gay, and all most wonderfully. Now we feel quite deserted—"the light of common day" has come back to our morning's work—but the memory of those other days still lives.

Now, we Seniors are quivering and quaking at the thought of another visitor, known well to you ex-students. The fatal days are already fixed—November 3rd, and onward!

Hockey has only just begun—we have had two games so far—the first we played among hay. But we have visions of bright, frosty days, and a smooth field.

Scouting days, too, are beginning. We have had one exciting paper chase over Loughrigg, when unfortunately the hares themselves got rather lost in the bracken!

The Drawing Room evenings since the last letter have been: "Milton," by Miss Cooke; "Thackeray," by Miss Millar; "Wordsworth," by Miss Openshaw; and "Liszt," by Miss Owen. A Shakespeare evening, "Richard III.," was arranged by Miss Thomas.

We have held only one Poetry Club so far this term, when an interesting paper on George Eliot and various extracts were read.

The College flower list now numbers 334, and the bird list 65.—Yours sincerely,

THE PRESENT STUDENTS.

NOTES FROM CRITICISM LESSONS.

GEOGRAPHY TO CLASS III.

We do not read summaries to children—we read what will *open* their minds.

Geography should make a country live.

The side-lights on a subject are the most interesting.

PICTURE TALK TO CLASS II.

Children should look at a picture until it is familiar, then we hope perhaps that some of the beauty steals into their minds unawares.

The next number of L'UMILE PIANTA will appear on January 15th, 1914. All communications should reach the Editor not later than December 20th, 1913.

THE "REFORMED SUNDAY SCHOOL."

I expect that most of the readers of the PIANTA take a keen interest in all educational movements, and feel a great attraction towards all efforts that make for the spiritual and intellectual improvement of the child, even when they differ from the methods in which we have ourselves been trained. Probably, therefore, you are already interested in the movement which is now on foot for reforming the Sunday Schools, and you may have had some practical experience of the methods of this Reform. I am only venturing to offer these few observations on the Reformed Sunday School in the hope of interesting those who have not hitherto come into contact with such schools, and trusting that those who know more about the principles and methods than I do myself will be led to discuss them. For these methods resemble those of the P.N.E.U. to some extent, and in other ways they might be altered so as to embrace some of the specially P.N.E.U. characteristics.

I was present several times at a Reformed Sunday School in the neighbourhood of Blackheath and Lewisham, and the remarks which follow chiefly refer to this school, though in some cases I have made use of what I have learnt from lectures and demonstration classes in different parts of the country, and of the experiences of several teachers, and that of my own attempts with classes of varying size and different ages of children. Remembering what I have known of the "unreformed" Sunday School my first impression was of the undisguised pleasure and interest of the children. Many of them far from immaculate in appearance, they crowded outside waiting for the doors to open, and on every occasion there were some recruits eagerly pushed forward with a "Please, may my sister come, she says she would like to," or, "Please, I've brought our baby, he's not too small, is he?" Once inside all the children take off their coats and hats so as to feel less cumbered and more at home. In an "unreformed" Sunday School the caps of the boys are so often on the floor during the lesson or in the possession of the wrong boy, while the girls suffer from too tight elastic on their hats, which also form a topic of conversation. The children are arranged in their classes outside the main school-room, when possible, each teacher being there to welcome and look after her own scholars, and the attendance register is often marked also in the passage or anteroom before school begins. Punctually the door is opened and the children march in to music, in single file, each class headed by the teacher. The Superintendent is ready waiting in the room, and, if possible, there is a special pianist who remains at the piano the whole time, but sometimes one of the teachers plays the opening march and hymns. The schoolroom is made as bright and pretty as possible with flowers and sacred pictures. The children sit, at first, on chairs placed in rows—one class in each row—and, when possible, the kindergarten,

that is the children under 8, the Junior School between 8 and 11, the Middle School between 10 and 12, the Senior School between 11 and 14, are in separate rooms, or, at least, the Kindergarten and Junior School in one and the Middle and Senior Schools in another. For the younger children a few bars are played as a sign for them to stand or sit, and all is done in the most quiet and orderly manner. The Superintendent leads the simple prayers, and sometimes she says a few words on what prayer is, how to stand or kneel, etc. Then comes the hymn, the older children have hymn books and the babies have a hymn they have learnt by heart. After this the Superintendent sometimes has a Preliminary Talk and then each class marches off in turn, while the piano plays, to its special place. Of course, there always have to be several classes in one room, but the teachers gather the children round them in a semicircle and they talk quite quietly, for throughout there is a wonderful atmosphere of happy calm. Each teacher has her pile of materials, pictures, etc., beside her on a little table or chair and the whole is often covered with a cloth so as not to attract curious eyes too soon!

With the Kindergarten the lessons are nearly always Bible stories told in simple narrative form, but the teacher always begins by questioning the class on something in which they are already interested and so connects the new lesson with something in their own lives or with what they have already learnt. This, of course, is only carrying out the principle of "From the known to the Unknown," but the teacher often shows considerable skill in arresting the attention of the whole class and making them all eager to impart information upon something in everyday life. With older children the same idea of an introduction, or, as it is technically called, a "Point of Contact," is used. Older children are made to contribute more to the lesson. I have heard most interesting lessons on the Bible and on the Church Catechism given entirely

in question and answer—the teacher eliciting all the points, and even the very words of the Catechism by means of skilful questioning. If the lesson is a narrative one still the questioning plays an important part in eliciting the application of the story after the description has been given. Older children can read the Bible aloud verse by verse, or follow while one of the class or the teacher reads. One great point about these lessons is the variety of method in teaching and also the way in which the teacher changes the method to suit the class. She had started to tell a Bible story, perhaps finds that the class knows it very well and are eager to tell it themselves, so she turns to the method of Question and Answer. The teachers often show great skill also in weaving interruptions and counter attractions into the lesson, so that the wandering interest is easily recaptured. An inattentive child finds himself brought into the story in such ways as “There was a little boy standing there, just about your size, Johnny.”

A great use is made of the blackboard in teaching. It is generally impossible for every teacher to have a big blackboard on an easel, but little hand blackboards, which the teacher can hold on her knee, are quite as good, if not better. Little “slate boards,” 12 in. by 6 in., can be bought for 3d. each. In teaching little children the teacher often draws on the blackboard, and let no one be dismayed at the thought! for the most crude attempts are appreciated by the children. I cannot draw a bit myself, so I know what feeble efforts can do, for the children always love it. The great thing is to draw, while speaking, adding details as one describes them. For older children the teacher draws plans and sketch-maps, and uses the blackboard for headings during the lesson, or for summaries, supplied by the children, after the lesson. Pictures are invaluable for the little ones, and such good Bible pictures are published very cheaply nowadays that it is quite easy to make a collection. Models made in

brown paper or cardboard are very helpful for the older ones. A model of an Eastern house makes the Healing of the Lame Man let Down from the Roof, so graphic, and a model of an Eastern tomb clears up many difficulties in giving a lesson on the Resurrection. Older children often love maps too, and while younger children do not understand real maps, they can get a very good idea of the situation of a place from a sand tray in which the teacher has marked the roads and hills, put in the town with a few bricks, and a few twigs for trees, etc.

Every lesson has a distinct aim, but the application is not forced on the child, but either elicited from him by questions or so strongly brought out in the story that the child cannot fail to realise it. The younger children often learn verses of hymns and texts, and the older ones the Church Catechism or useful summaries. But one of the principles faithfully carried out by the Reform Movement is, “Ideas before Words.” It is impossible for a child to understand the mysteries of the Christian faith which are only partly understood by the wisest of us, but some meaning suitable to the child, and some interest is attached to every text or doctrine before it is learnt by heart.

But the lesson is not finished when the story is done, and the application arrived at, for another characteristic of these methods is the carrying out of the axiom, “No impression without expression.” The child must have some outlet for showing what he has learnt. With little children this is often provided by allowing them to draw with crayons or pencil on bits of paper. They draw anything in the story that they like, and very often they endeavour to portray the whole story. Very strange some of these drawings are, but they are wonderfully expressive, and give a good index to the child's mind. In some schools the Kindergarten can “express” themselves in clay, or rather, plasticine, or with the sand

tray. They are never allowed to draw or model Our Lord, but, if necessary, they put a cross to indicate Him. Children over eight do not draw, because by that age they realise their deficiencies more, and are ashamed of their own drawings or laugh at those of others, but they delight in drawing maps or plans, or in making little models in brown paper. When they can write easily, writing is most often used, and they write down summaries or answers to questions or reports. After some specially devotional lessons they sometimes write prayers of their own composition. With all means of expression narration can be combined. If there is not time for the whole class to narrate the whole story, each can do a part as he brings up his drawing or writing.

The whole lesson, including the expression work, takes half an hour to forty minutes. Then the classes go back in order, carrying their chairs, and arrange them in rows in front of the Superintendent's desk, and she generally gives a little talk, summing up the lesson or bringing out the special significance of the Sunday. Then there is another hymn and concluding prayer, and the children march out. Sometimes the Superintendent has a special large picture, illustrating the lesson, to show them before they go home. The Superintendent keeps the register, and, as far as possible, visits the children during the week, and the teacher visits her own class from time to time. This is not such a difficult business as it sounds, for there are not generally more than six or eight children in each class.

The Superintendent holds a teacher's training class every week, when she goes through the lesson for the following Sunday, and comments on the work of the last Sunday. This is her opportunity for training the teachers in right methods of teaching, and also of discussing their difficulties. So it is upon the Superintendent that most of the work and responsibility devolves. To a trained teacher the work is not

so difficult, and a splendid opportunity of studying and practising the Reformed methods for Sunday Schools and classes of all kinds, is offered at St. Christopher's College, Blackheath, where training is given at very low terms for periods varying from a fortnight to a year. If the Superintendent be trained, she can train the teachers.

This is a very slight sketch of a movement which is increasing rapidly, and is exerting a wide influence on the teaching, not only of the Sunday Schools, but of Bible Classes and of classes of all kinds for boys and girls. The methods are not perfect, of course, but they are inspired by a deep love for children and a wide knowledge of the child's mind combined with high spiritual ideals, and a desire to "feed Christ's lambs" in the best possible way.

GAMES FOR PARTIES.

Most of us, I am sure, come in for more or less responsibility in providing entertainment for children's parties during our post life. How delightful are such occasions, when everything goes off with a swing! The best moment of all is when one bids farewell to the last of the small guests, departing reluctantly, but radiantly happy. Yes, when it is over, a children's party is a pleasant thing. But, when it looms in the near future, it is sometimes a little alarming. There are some people with fertile brains, who are always equal to the occasion, and arrange delightfully novel programmes without any apparent effort. Then there are others, less happily endowed, who, before these festive events, have to go through a brain-racking process with often but moderate success.

Let no one be deceived by these opening remarks. I belong to the latter class, and write now rather in the hope of receiving some suggestions than of imparting anything new to anyone else. Would it not be a good plan if we were to

exchange ideas on this subject? I mean, since games that are familiar to some of us may be new to others, would it not be profitable if people were to tell about anything of that sort which others might care to know?

To set the example, and at the risk of telling something which everyone knows already (though it is fairly new to me), I shall describe a game called "Kick the Can," which is excellent for an outdoor party.

One child is "It." The others stand in a row, ready to flee into hiding as soon as one of their number has kicked a tin can placed between the row and "It." The kicker gives as big a kick as he can, and rushes off with the others to hide. "It" runs after the can, replaces it in its former position with all possible haste, and proceeds to look for the hiders. As soon as he sees anyone, he calls the name and rushes to the can, which he must tap three times. Should the discovered person reach the can before "It," he may kick the former as far away as possible, and run off again to hide, while "It" replaces the can. If he is not so fortunate, however, he must remain a prisoner till some companion seizes the opportunity, when "It" is prowling at a safe distance, to kick the can again. Both kicker and prisoner try to make good their escape while "It" is engaged in replacing the can. The game ends when "It" has captured everyone. Great excitement prevails when everybody save one is in prison, and all eagerly await the rescuer. Should the latter succeed in kicking the can, all flee off once more, and "It" has to begin his task all over again.

Treasure-hunts are invaluable for summer parties, and, being capable of endless variations, they never grow stale. But there is no need to enlarge on this theme, for it is well known to everyone. A delightful treasure-hunt at a Scale How juniors' picnic was my first introduction to such

things, and has served as the ground-plan for many another since.

Then there are many kinds of races and competitions, whose chief charm lies in their novelty. Does anyone know this race, for instance? Having chosen partners, one child in each couple takes off a shoe, which is put in a large basket some distance away. The remaining children (*i.e.*, the partners who are not minus a shoe) have to run to the basket, find their partners' shoe, run back, and put it on the partner's foot; then the first couple who are ready rush off, hand in hand, to the winning-post.

The Scale How sports, I find, are a fertile source to which to look for inspiration. Nothing can beat the flower-pot race, and the dressing-up race. The success of a party, with these two races in its programme, is practically assured.

Now that winter is here, a suggestion for an indoor party might be more appropriate. Here is one. Before the children arrive, a number of small things, such as buttons, pens, lumps of sugar, gloves, biscuits, and such, are placed, not too conspicuously, in various parts of the room. Each child is provided with pencil and paper, and, within a given time, has to make a list of everything he sees in a place where it ought not to be. For example, a footstool might be found on a chair, a cup on the floor, and so on. One might write a little sermon on the educational value of this game! But I must take up no more space, and please everyone forgive me if I have told you nothing new.

L. M. MACDONALD.

A SWARM OF LOCUSTS.

In the days of my early childhood I used to be fascinated by a book akin to the "World at Home." It was called "Near Home and Far Off," and I used to think that if there was one thing I should like to do when grown up, it was to

visit some of the places mentioned in that book, and to see for myself some of the wonders described. Especially was I interested in the account of a swarm of locusts. It was, then, with a thrill of excitement that I heard that I should probably experience one in the Argentine.

I had often heard the locusts spoken of and plans discussed for exterminating them—an apparently hopeless task—but a year passed, and I saw nothing of the millions that I heard ravaged the country for miles round. One day, however, the children and I were returning from our morning bath in the mountain stream, when we saw down in the Plain, some sixteen miles away, a cloud moving along, which the children explained was a dust cloud. As we were then staying at a place high up among the Andes, and far away from any dusty roads or town, I thought this was not likely; so I suggested locusts, and then they agreed it might be. This proved right, and off and on for the rest of the day I watched this ever-moving mass; and when, towards evening, it vanished, I was told the creatures had settled.

Three days afterwards they reached us, and we got up from our siesta to find the air alive with them, and the people in the surrounding ranchos lighting fires and clanking tins, in the hope of keeping them off their little gardens. After some hours the locusts settled, and the whole landscape was changed from green to dull red. Every tree, post, railing became a living mass, and so heavily weighted were the branches of the trees that many were broken off. It was a wonderful sight. The next day the locusts dropped from the trees to the ground, and then it became impossible to walk without treading on them, and putting up a cloud of them. They stayed with us three days, and then rose, and continued their flight up the valley, leaving the country bare of anything green whatever. Sad, indeed, was the devastation, and bad enough for us, but how much worse for the poor people

in the ranchos, who depended upon selling their garden produce for a living.

As every family was expected to assist in clearing them off the land, our Indians were sent out to collect them in sacks (the Government pays so much a sack for them), and they were just swept up. Needless to say, this was a very inadequate way of dealing with such vast numbers. Fortunately, in that part of the Argentine such a swarm was rather unusual.

CEYLON.

Having been just twelve days in Ceylon, six of which have been spent among the tea-covered hills of Nuwana Elija, one feels perfectly competent, from a globe-trotter's point of view, to write and describe Colombo and its inhabitants. In spite of this being my first glimpse of the East, somehow it all seems familiar. The slow-moving bullock carts, the yellow-robed priests with their shaven heads and accompanying umbrella and fan, the steady, loping trot of one's streaming rickshaw coolie, the feathery palms and tattered plantains—one has read of them all so often, that the whole panorama, even the ever-varying procession of semi-naked, brown humanity comes as a well-known and often-imagined sight.

Yesterday we took the tram and went all down Main Street to Victoria Bridge and back by a long circuit through the native quarter. There is a saying in Australia that all bad temper and language may be forgiven a bullock drover, surely the same latitude ought to be extended to the driver of a Colombo electric tram through the "Pettah." To start with the roads are so narrow that only one cart can pass a tram at a time, and over the metals stray mangy chickens, high-smelling goats, frisky bullock-calves dragging their attendants, endless children, and always the ever-present